

THIRTY YEARS AGO

ON THE

WHITEMUD RIVER

or

THE LAST OF THE OPEN RANGE

by

HARRY OTTERSON
Eastend, Sask.

COMPLIMENTS PX3 RANCH
MAPLE CREEK, SASK.



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In the early dawn on the morning of November 15, 1906, Mrs. Otterson and I left Malta, Montana, to drive across country to the Bloom Cattle Co. ranch, known as the T-Down Bar, located on the Whitemud River, about five miles down stream from the Eastend Barracks of the R.C.M.P. The distance by trail from Malta was roughly one hundred and twenty-five miles, and as the country was unsettled except for isolated ranches, we had to gauge each day's travel with regard to having a ranch to stay over-night. We were riding in a buckboard, that useful and fairly comfortable heavy buggy, that had been devised for light travelling on the prairie.

We had a real pair of bronco horses, and they had been prepared by having an oat ration for two weeks, and felt very much like bolting in the cold and scattering the whole outfit. I was also leading a saddle horse tied to the side of one of the team with saddle and bridle on. This was a lovely horse - kind and gentle, and of great endurance. The extra horse and saddle was a kind of insurance in those days, as you could scout around in event of uncertainty, and what little space there was left was filled with wearing apparel and our personal treasures.

On the same morning, James Stowe left for the T-Down ranch, with a four-horse team and heavy wagon with our furniture and some supplies, and with him went Jack Brown and his great fine stag hounds - the best wolf dogs I have ever seen. I had made arrangements with Brown to hunt wolves that winter. These wolves were the large grey kind and called in the south "Lobo". Wolves were quite numerous on the Whitemud and killed a great many cattle during the winter months. The grey wolf is a very cunning animal, and very seldom will he eat any food or bait found lying about, but when hungry simply kills an animal, eats his fill and never returns. So the wolf is very difficult to trap or poison.

J. Stowe and Brown took a different route. They travelled down Milk River to Mitchell's Coulee, then leaving Milk River, went across to White Water Creek, striking that creek at Sowers Brothers sheep ranch, then up White Water Creek to the Canadian line. At the line was a small log cabin belonging to F. Morton, a sheep man who used the upper white water country for a summer range, but at this time of year was deserted. After crossing the Canadian line they would travel in a north-west direction across a big open country about fifty miles to the Stone Pile camp on the Whitemud, where we had a winter camp and supplies. The Stone Pile winter camp had been a R.N.W.M.P. post, but the police were withdrawn and the place abandoned. When the boys reached Stone Pile they would follow the police patrol road, thirty-five miles north-west to the T-Down ranch. We also had another branch of the expedition to the West of us - four men: Jim Baker, Gus Shultz, Jim Spurlock and Elbert Davison, who was in charge. They left Malta four days ahead of me with the round-up mess wagon and about sixty head of saddle horses. They were on their way to Canadian custom port of entry at Willow Creek to enter the horses and equipment, and then travel across country to the T-Down ranch, a distance of sixty-five or seventy miles.

At the port of entry Pat Allen was in charge. He was quite an old-timer in the Mounted Police and had been in charge at the Ten-Mile detachment, and was transferred to Willow Creek when the post was built. Mr. Allen married a daughter of M. Mitchell of Medicine Hat, one of the pioneer cattle men of that district. I was quite well acquainted with Pat Allen in an official capacity. I was in charge of a round-up outfit in Montana and we worked the country as far north as the C.P.R. railway and reported in and out through Mr. Allen, and also entered sixteen hundred head of breeding heifers

through Willow Creek. I consider Mr. Allen had all the high principles devotion to duty and the sense of fairness that are becoming tradition when we think nowadays of the R.C.M.P. Mr. Allen passed away a number of years ago. Peace be with him in the last big round-up.

Now that these two outfits are on their way it is time to go back and see how Mrs. Otterson and I are getting along. With our lively team we made rapid headway that first morning. Also, we had quite a good trail, and by eleven o'clock reached Big Cottonwood Creek at Fred Wilson's ranch, twenty-five miles. We unhitched our horses and gave them water and a good feed of oats. We did justice to our own lunch, and as the air was warm we felt very optimistic. From here on to the T-Down there was no trail, and as the season was pretty well advanced, travelling long distances was a bit uncertain. At twelve-thirty we were on our way again, and shortly after the wind sprung out of the north, and soon scudding clouds appeared. About four o'clock rain began falling. I intended to make Chris Maloney's ranch for the night, but darkness came on and we were still some eight or ten miles distant. Rain fell steadily and it was impossible to see any distance. I knew Maloney had a winter camp in a deep coulee, running back from the Woody Island Creek, so I decided we had better make for it, as it was only a few miles. The country here was very rough and finally we got down through the rough canyons to the creek bottom, and I took the saddle horse and went to hunt which coulee the camp was located in, for one could not see fifty feet in the storm.

Mrs. Otterson did not like the idea of being alone with the team, but I assured her that I could find my way back after I had located the camp. I did not know if Maloney had put anyone in the camp yet or not. But at any rate there was a good cabin and sheds and hay. My sense of direction held true and it was not long until I located the camp and returned to Mrs. Otterson. She declared I had surely been away three or four hours, but I had ridden only about four miles. We drove up the coulee and pretty soon dogs began barking and then we could see light shining through the window - a very agreeable sight.

Mr. Maloney had just moved a band of about three thousand sheep into this camp a few days before, and a young man by the name of Johnson and his wife and small baby were going to winter there. Also there were a couple of other men who had brought the sheep. They were very much surprised to see a woman coming on such a night, and at any rate lady visitors were very rare at those times. But they certainly made us welcome and insisted I go into the house while they took care of the horses. It was not very long before there was a pot of coffee and all the substantial food that makes up a ranch meal, ready for us, to which we did full justice. I was acquainted with Johnson and also his wife. She was the daughter of Fred Gloyn, an old-time rancher located at Horse Shoe Lake, so we had plenty to talk about, and soon it was twelve o'clock and we were ready for bed. The rain was still falling steadily, and we were all certain that we were in for a bad storm, for such weather at that time of the year was unusual for this country.

This being a sheep camp there was quite a number of dogs around. There was one bedroom off the kitchen, where the man and his wife and baby slept. There seemed to be a few dogs that liked to slip in there. The other men had a bunk house and they went out there. Mrs. Johnson suggested that Mrs. Otterson sleep with her and the baby, and Mr. Johnson and I would sleep in my bed which I had brought inside, on the kitchen floor. Mrs. Otterson had made some inspection of the bedroom and whispered to me that we would sleep

on the floor and not disturb the family arrangements. So after putting outside all the dogs we could scare up, we went to bed. I am sure there must have been a hole in the wall somewhere, for those dogs to get back into the house, for I was putting them out several times before morning.

The next morning the rain had ceased and a heavy fog hung over the hills - a real dense fog - and we hesitated to leave as there was no trail across to Sidney Brockaway's ranch where we intended to stay the second night. It was a short move, but the last ranch until we arrived home at the T-Down ranch. By noon, the fog still held and as we were anxious to make the Brockaway ranch, we started. I was satisfied that I could find the way on the saddle horse, and Mrs. Otterson said she could follow me with the team. I have discussed this method of finding a direction with several plainsmen, and they all agree with me that driving a team during a blizzard or at night or in a fog they invariably got lost, but on a saddle horse they would make their point. So away we went with the good wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and their hopes that we might arrive before a blizzard might strike, for we were all agreed that a big storm was in the air. I rode on a good keen gallop and the country was fairly rough, also plenty of badger holes and rocks, and Mrs. Otterson gave a pretty fair exhibition of the early stage coach driver. She kept me well in sight, as I had told her that I would not pay much attention to her for I would need to concentrate all my sense on keeping the right direction. Our team had been used for a lead team on the roundup and were accustomed to following a pilot, for on roundups there was always a rider who was acquainted with the country sent along to pilot wagons from one camp to another.

The Woody Island Creek makes a big bend from Johnson's camp to Brockaway's, who live on the same Creek, and we were travelling across the bench. At about three o'clock the fog lifted and as we drew in towards the creek from the south I pointed out the Brockaway Ranch in the distance. I tied my horse alongside and relieved my wife of the lines. She was quite willing, although feeling pretty proud of her feat. She said there were a few panicky moments coming over those hills, for fear she might lose sight of the pilot in the fog. By the time we reached the valley of the creek snow began falling, and the wind from the northwest began to freshen, and by the time we reached the Brockaway Ranch the storm was on.

Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Brockaway were at home alone and certainly welcomed us; but Mrs. Brockaway took time to ask what I was thinking of to bring a woman out on such a trip at that time of year. However, I explained that she was determined to go to the ranch, and if she went by train to Maple Creek there would still be about sixty-five miles to be made by team.

The storm increased steadily, and the next morning there was a real blizzard on, and about ten below. We loafed around until after dinner and Mrs. Brockaway said that Sid and I were getting to be a nuisance, and as Sid had brought home wall paper for a couple of their rooms we started that afternoon to put on wall paper; it served a double purpose - kept us from pestering the women and got the house papered. The storm continued all day and all night. We played cards and watched the weather. Brockaway at this time was in the horse business so was quite as much concerned about the weather as the sheep and cattle men.

The next morning the storm still continued and Sid and I finished our paper hanging. I developed some cleverness in making paper stick, and Mrs. Brockaway complimented me on good workmanship. The second night we played cards again, with an eye on the weather.

Along towards midnight the wind began to die and by bedtime the clouds were breaking up and stars were showing.

We had a long drive from there to the T-Down ranch, and no house or shelter between for about sixty-five miles. So in order to get across in one day we had to be on the trail in the early morning light. We had discussed the hazard of this drive, and Mr. and Mrs. Brockaway insisted that Mrs. Otterson stay with them, and I go on if I must, and return later for her when the weather had settled. I favoured this plan also, as I felt uneasy about the road conditions. There was not much snow at Brockaway's but I was afraid I might run into deep snow on the big flat south of the Whitemud. But Mrs. Otterson was no quitter and no amount of argument could dissuade her. She said, "Well, we have made through several bad spots so far on this trip and I am going to see it through". Well, that settled the matter. So the next morning at four o'clock we sat down to breakfast. The team was harnessed and all our plunder in the buckboard ready to start, the Brockaways still trying to discourage Mrs. Otterson. The weather was clear and perfectly still, and about twelve below zero. We bid goodbye to our kind friends and headed for the last leg of our journey. Our horses were certainly keen and we rattled through those rocky hills along the Canadian line. We crossed the line about sunrise, and I pointed out a pile of boulders which marked the international boundary line at that time. Since then a joint survey by Canada and U.S. set the iron markers that we see at present to mark the line.

The air was very clear, and I could see the height of land south of Eastend Barracks which marked the southernmost point of the Cypress Hills, and our course to strike the ranch lay a few points to the right. After an hour or so the mirage disappeared and there was no land mark to guide us. The prairie was one vast white blanket, but the snow was light and I made the team step out for I was uneasy about the change in the weather on account of having my wife along. Occasionally we would sight a band of range horses and there were little flocks of antelope everywhere, and several large herds. I am sure in the day's travel that antelope could always be seen in the distance. The country between the Whitemud and Woody Island Creek was one of the large antelope ranges of the west. As the sun rose higher the temperature moderated to about zero, and as there was no wind we were quite comfortable, and as we travelled north the snow seemed lighter. My wife and I discussed many things, and gazing at the great open country we wondered when it would ever be settled by families, and if it would be possible to live out on those bleak plains in winter time. To the east there was not a house until one reached Wood Mountain, about one hundred miles distance. And to the west the Willow Creek port of entry about sixty miles, and only a few isolated ranches north to the C.P.R. main line. So there was ample room to get lost, freeze, starve or both. I was inclined to doubt the country would be settled or railroads built during our time. (We were crossing about where the town of Frontier is now located). I argued the big cattle outfits would lease the whole country under the twenty-one year terms the Dominion Government offered, and the country would remain a cattle and horse range. Mrs. Otterson did not agree. She argued that in the near future people would migrate into this district, and reminded me of the bare, dry plains of Kansas and Colorado where people homesteaded; and while the climate was colder, to her it appeared a fertile country. The grass was six to eight inches tall, all the lakes were glistening with ice, and the people would have plenty of hay for the taking, and the hardy grains would surely grow, also some vegetables. But she doubted we would live to see the railroad built.

About twelve o'clock we stopped and I fed the horses some oats in the nose bags and managed to break the ice in a lake and give them a drink. In the buckboard we ate a very generous lunch that Mrs. Brockaway had provided for us. We had been travelling about seven hours and I figured we were a little more than halfway to the ranch, and we were feeling very pleased the weather was calm and clear. There was a small bunch of antelope standing on a little knoll not far away watching us. I presume it was an unusual sight for them. We did not tarry very long over our lunch, and by one o'clock we were on our way. The afternoon was uneventful. Antelope were everywhere; an odd band of horses; a coyote or two; and one big fat badger. About four-thirty the Cypress Hills became visible, and our spirits were very high, as we were sure now that we would arrive without mishap. We drove into the ranch about six o'clock, very pleased with everything, and the boys were certainly glad to see us as we were then two weeks overdue. There were three men at the ranch - Ira Triplett, Emmet Smith and George Mock. We had rounded up the T-Down range early in October and weaned about eight hundred calves.

We had a large woven wire corral built near a lake on the head of Horse Camp Coulee, about twenty-five miles south of where Shaunavon now stands. To separate the calves from their mothers we placed them all in the corral the night before, and at daybreak next morning we opened the gate and two men on foot would stand at the gate with long sticks to keep the calves inside. The cows were wild and anxious to dash out, and it is surprising how soon the cows were all outside bawling around the corral. Then we all dashed at the cows and drove them east down the coulee out of sight. They were very hard to move, but by much yelling and firing of six shooters we finally succeeded. The ranch was north-west about twenty miles, where we took the calves to winter. The country is open high prairie and a fine place to out-run wild calves who want to run back to their mothers. We left four men to hold the cows until we got out of sight with the calves. The mess wagon was gone on to camp on the river about three miles below the ranch. We put the saddle horses on the flat about one quarter mile from the gate to attract the calves, and then drove them ahead of the calves all the way. Every one tightens his saddle cinches and his belt if he has one. Three men ride into the corral to scare out the stragglers, the balance of the cowboys line up out from the gate. The gate is opened and they come with a rush, eight hundred good husky throats bawling so you could not hear a cannon fired off. The horse wrangler led straight off with the horses; the calves are headed in behind them, and with more yelling and six-shooters we are away.

This was a beautiful herd of calves, nearly every one a Hereford. The season had been very favourable and they were very fat. We moved along without accident and reached camp about three o'clock, ate in relays and kept the calves moving. And when I say ate, I mean a meal. Dashing about at top speed from four A.M. to three P.M. creates a fair appetite. We arrived at the ranch near sundown, and using the milk cows to toll the calves into the corrals, had no trouble. We secured the gates, and leaving two men at the ranch overnight the balance returned to the roundup camp three miles down the river. By ten o'clock every one was asleep, for it had been a lively day.

About twelve-thirty I was awakened by the clatter of hoofs of a swiftly running horse. Sleeping on the ground one can hear distinctly. It was Emmet Smith, one of the men left at the ranch. He tore up to the tent and yelled Hell had broke loose and the calves were out. Translated, it meant the calves in the outside pen, about two hundred and fifty head, were frightened in some

manner, stampeded and ran against the corral fence, smashing two panels, and were streaming across country on the way to where they were last with their mothers. The night herder had the horses on the flat about one mile from camp, and Emmet dashed out to help bring the horses in so we could saddle and try to catch those calves. Every cowboy was awakened and were not so cheerful, having only about three hours sleep. We saddled up hurriedly. We could hear different bunches of calves bawling as they go by in the darkness. They had broken up into small bunches of twenty or ten or even five or six. They were very hard to stop, for they were good and hungry for some milk. However, we dashed around in the darkness. The grass was long and badger holes plentiful. But no one was hurt, although several men got bad falls. At daylight we had got them together and forced them back to the ranch and into the corral. A check-up showed we had missed twenty-two head, which we thought was pretty good, all things considered.

This corral was built of heavy pine poles with real logs for posts, yet the force of those calves splintered it like board planks. At the time we gathered what beef cattle there was, and the bulls. We worked on East down the Whitemud, gathering beef cattle and bulls. We worked as far east as Breed Creek, then turned south to Malta, Montana, to ship the beef to Chicago, and put the bulls on the hay ranch for the winter on Beaver Creek. We were delayed two weeks at Malta waiting for stock cars, which accounted for Mrs. Otterson and I being so late in getting started for the Whitemud.

I must return to another branch of the expedition - the men with the mess wagon and saddle horses enroute to Willow Creek port of entry. They were caught in the storm near Joe Sheet's ranch on the west edge of the Cherry Patch Ridge, about forty miles northwest of Harlem, Montana, but did not lose any horses, and were near enough to the Sheet's ranch to get wood for fuel, so did not suffer. After the storm they proceeded to the port of entry, had the horses inspected and passed by the Canadian Veterinary, and paid the customs duty on the horses and equipment. (I had sent signed cheque blanks to Pat Allen to be filled out by him for the charges). After completing their business the boys headed for the T-Down Ranch. The weather had turned stormy again, and they had a very disagreeable trip travelling across country, and pulled into the ranch on the evening of November 27th. The horses looked bad, and the men I believe worse than bad.

Jim Stowe and Jack Brown coming by way of White Water and Stone Pile, reached the old Morton cabin on the Canadian line the evening the storm started and had a very good place to weather out the storm. They left from this camp the same morning we left Brockaway's. They headed for Stone Pile camp directly northwest about forty miles. There was no trail, but Jim Stowe was familiar with the country. The Mounted Police patrol road passed Stone Pile, left the river there, went across the bench and crossed the river again at the Seventy Mile Crossing, thirty miles east from Stone Pile. Jim figured if the weather turned stormy and they should veer too far to the left they would strike the river west of Stone Pile, and if they went too far to the right they would cross the patrol road and turn left on it and would come right into Stone Pile camp. The police road was a well defined trail and could be seen even with quite a heavy snow. Everything went well until about three-thirty P.M. They were in the vicinity of where Bracken now stands; here the snow was deeper and their progress was slow with quite a heavy load on the wagon. The wind sprang up from the northwest and snow began drifting. Darkness soon settled down and they kept on, not wanting to camp on the high ground, and expecting to either strike the police road or the Whitemud after dark. Jack Brown went in front of the team walking and very

watchful that they should not cross the police trail, and not know of it. Finally Jim Stowe, driving the wagon, sang out, "Jack, this must be the trail". He had driven straight across the road and was sure from the jolts that it was the trail. Jack had crossed without noticing. They kicked the snow away and convinced themselves, and discussed the wind, which they thought was northwest; but the wind had changed to northeast after dark and they had been travelling northeast instead of northwest. They turned right on the police trail when they should have turned left to make Stone Pile.

They managed to keep the trail and about one A.M. they reached the Seventy-Mile Crossing on the Whitemud, thirty-five miles east of Stone Pile. After travelling twenty hours they were about five miles nearer to Stone Pile camp. However, there was bush along the river for shelter and they put up their tent, and as the horses were weary they laid over the next day and then resumed their travels without further mishap, and I believe arrived at the T-Down Ranch two days after the boys from Willow Creek.

Well, we were all together again, each with his own story of cold and discomfort. I went to the Eastend Barracks and made my report to Harry Willis, who was in charge. He was a typical figure for the M.P. He was raised, I believe, in Nova Scotia, and had considerable experience among lumberjacks and miners. He was a fine figure of a man - tall, dark, with a heavy black mustache; jovial in manner; had a keen sense of fairness, and was a good poker player. Mr. Willis returned to the ranch with me for, he said, it was easy to pass the horses, saddles, etc., but foreign ladies deserved more attention. He was a grand fellow.

The weather continued unsettled, with light blizzards. We rested the horses a few days. We still had some round-up work to do, and intended weaning another five hundred head of calves, and there was quite a few bulls still on the range. As there seemed no break in the weather we pulled out from the ranch, I think, on December second and moved east to fifty-mile crossing on the Whitemud to begin work. We intended to work back from there as we had not gathered the calves on that part of the range. The snow was getting quite deep and we had to shovel snow off the ground when we set up the tent at each camp, then after the fire was built it would thaw out and become wet, and when the fire died out everything froze as the temperature was from ten to twenty below zero at night - not very pleasant. The cattle were all in the rough country along the river and we soon had quite a herd. Then came a bad blizzard and the range cattle drifted in on us and we lost our herd. This happened several times. We were moving back towards the corral on Horse Camp Coulee to separate the calves and cows; our horses were getting very poor after a summer's hard work and the long trip to Willow Creek. At every camp we would have to leave one or two, worn out. It seemed tough to leave them exhausted in snow a foot deep, bitter cold and a long winter ahead.

We finally reached the corral with about three hundred calves and cows and twenty-five bulls. We put the cattle in the corral that night intending to separate them the next morning. About midnight the wind came out of the north and blew a gale, and at daylight there was a raging blizzard. We had to turn our herd out of the corral and let them drift to the river for shelter, for the weather was too severe to try and hold them in the bleak locality. We had two saddle horses tied to the wagon, known as night horses, and the boys managed to round up the balance of the horse herd. By twelve o'clock we had taken down the tent, hitched up the work horses and moved to the river bottom for shelter and fuel. We now gave up trying to take the calves to headquarters ranch and decided to wean

at the Stone Pile Camp, as there was a fair corral there and quite a lot of hay, and to move them later on to the upper ranch. So next day the storm having passed we started again to gather those calves and separate them at Stone Pile. Albert Davidson and Jim Stowe left us to return to Malta. They took two pack horses and the two they were mounted on and started at four A.M. for the Morton cabin on the Montana border, about forty miles southeast, the same cabin Jim Stowe and Jack Brown were caught in the storm on the way over. I learned after that they made the cabin near midnight, so they had a full day's travelling.

I left Ira Triplett, Jim Spurlock, Emmet Smith and Brown at Stone Pile, and the balance took the wagons and horses to the home ranch. The date was about December 15th, pretty late in the season for round-up work. We turned the horses loose for the winter east from the ranch in what is now known as the Cloverley District. The horses were very weak and poor and I was afraid there would be quite a number that would not show up in the spring round-up. I kept at the ranch for the winter, George Mock, Jim Baker, Ed Patterson, Gus Shultz and Punch Patterson.

Mrs. Otterson had got well settled by now, and was very popular with the cowboys. She had quite a flair for pastry cooking, cakes, pies, etc., which goes over big with men who live most of the time on sour dough bread and beef. Mrs. Dan Morrison had been down to visit. Their ranch was only two miles up the river. Dan Morrison and his brother Angus were in partnership and had a nice herd of cattle and horses. The country was sparsely settled. To the east there were only three winter cow camps - our camp at Stone Pile, the Turkey-Track camp on the big flat where W.A. Huff now lives, and another Turkey-Track camp at the Montana line known as the line camp. The next ranches were around the M.P. Barracks in the Wood Mountain. There were quite a number of ranches all through the Cypress Hills. There are many spring creeks and enough timber for all purposes, plenty of hay and natural shelter for cattle, and the Chinook winds strike there frequently - a very desirable locality for cattle ranching.

Travelling west up the Whitemud the first ranch was Harry Barnett's, near the M.P. Barracks. He was quite a character, and had travelled in far places on this earth. He was an Englishman, a bachelor, and had served in the British Army. He spent some time in Africa, India, China, Australia, and attempted the overland trip from Edmonton to the Yukon gold fields in '98 in company with Buck Ripley and Berner Gibbons, which alone would make a story. He was very punctilious about visiting the neighbours and twice a year he made the rounds of his chosen friends. He had many of the English expressions. In beginning a statement he often used the expression "Dem me, Sir." In conversation one day he made the remark, "Dem me, Sir, I must go and visit Mr. and Mrs. Dan Morrison or they will think I am mad at them." He always made you very welcome at his ranch and we certainly enjoyed his visits at our ranch.

The next habitation was the Eastend Police Barracks. Harry Willis was in charge and had two constables to assist him. The M.P. attended to police work, Customs, and in fact were about judge and jury for the surrounding country, and did a good job. They kept what you might call an open house; every one was welcome and was assured of good comfortable quarters for himself and his horse.

Buck Hardin, his wife and young son Ripley were on the Z-X Ranch where Eastend now stands. Buck came north from Texas, a young fellow following the trail of the cattle outfits. The Z-X Ranch was located by Jack Enright and J. C. Strong, from Butte City, Montana,

in 1902. The Enright Bros. had a small cattle ranch near Glasgow, Montana, but Jack had drifted to Butte and opened a gambling house known as the California Club, and later J. C. Strong was taken in as partner. The pay roll in Butte at that time was around one million dollars per month, so their business flourished.

William Huff drove across from Montana their herd of about thirteen hundred cattle and some very well bred horses, and remained for some time as manager. They made application for the valley lands around Eastend Barracks, under the Irrigation Act, in force at that time, and proceeded to construct a large dam in the river and build large canals and ditches to distribute the water; also fenced about one township for range. They employed an army of men for a number of years. Unfortunately the dam was destroyed by a spring flood, and they never rebuilt it.

The next ranch was owned by the Potter Brothers; they were English folks with the pioneer spirit.

Further up the stream was W. Freel and his wife and family.

Jack Garrisee, Pete Chourrout and his wife and family had a ranch near the present town of Ravenscrag.

Bauldy Reed had a ranch at the mouth of Dry Coulee.

R. Boulton had a ranch on the Farwell Creek near the Whitemud. Mr. Bolton and his wife were from England and were very old-timers. He was afterwards killed on the C.P.R. while shipping cattle.

H. Bettington was located where Davis Creek empties into the Whitemud. He also was from England. He had a good herd of cattle and also some very fine horses. He was a bachelor.

Herman Bruneau was located on Belanger Creek near the river.

Ziegler and Whitcomb are on Sucker Creek just north of David Lake, and D. J. Wiley is located on the west end of Davis Lake. Mr. and Mrs. Wiley were from England - very early pioneers in that district.

Travelling up the Frenchman Creek we find Spencer Pearse located where Pine Coulee empties in. He is another of the early English pioneer cattlemen, and has a picturesque location for his ranch - bubbling, clear sparkling water running through the yard, and surrounded by poplar and evergreen trees.

Then comes the ranch of Frank Cross, located where the police trail from Maple Creek joins the trail to Eastend.

Across the Frenchman, further on, his brother Harry Cross, has built his ranch in a beautiful spot surrounded by poplar and evergreen trees.

To the east up a deep canyon, a tributary of the Frenchman, Ben Rose is located. And this is a very important spot as he is the postmaster of Eastend, the only post office in the whole country, where the mail arrives once a week, and is also quite a social centre, as the men gather there on mail days and usually spend the night. Mr. Rose has a comfortable log house and plenty of stable room for the

saddle horses. He is a bachelor, but a good cook, and on mail nights makes preparations for the crowd - a big pot of coffee and plenty of roast beef and bread. Everybody is welcome. Harry Cross was usually the master of ceremonies, and while Ben worked most of the night sorting mail and getting outgoing mail ready to go in the morning the rest of us played poker and discussed the possible winter loss on the range and the chances for a raise in price of beef steers. Ben would give a social dance occasionally, and the six or eight ladies, mostly all married, received plenty of attention and did not sit out any dances, for there would possibly be forty men present. Joe Renault had the contract for hauling the mail from Maple Creek and the winter of 1906 and '7 it was very difficult to travel. His trail was by way of Sandy McCarthy's ranch on Bear Creek, who kept the post office called Skibbereen, then east to Skull Creek by way of the Phil Ross Ranch, then south by the Lewis Ranch on the North Fork of the Swift Current Creek and on to the Eastend post office. The distance was about sixty miles. He had the trail blazed from Skull Creek across to Eastend by putting Willows upright in the ground a short distance apart. This part of his trip was across the top of the Cypress Hills and the winds were higher as a rule, and snow drifting reduced visibility, hence the willow pickets to keep him on his course. Joe Renault was French Canadian from the east, and was a very genial companion. Often times he would play poker all night, having driven all day with the mail, and at sunrise would start out on the return trip. The boys claimed if Joe was lucky it would be a fine morning, but if he was loser the morning would seem very cold. Joe Renault was a rare type of French Canadian pioneer who helped to tame the west. He passed away several years ago, and I am sure found rest in the last great roundup.

Crawford and Jones, two men from England, had a ranch a few miles north of Eastend Barracks. Sam Smith, his wife and family were located on the head of South Fork of Swift Current Creek. Dan Pollock's ranch was located where the South Fork runs out on the flat from the hills. Dan Pollock was an ex-mounted policeman and had been in charge of the Eastend Detachment at one time. William Axton joined him on the east; they were together in the R.N.W.M.P. and they resigned and went into the cattle business. They soon married, Mrs. Pollock coming from Toronto - a boyhood sweetheart of Dan's.

Mrs. Axton was a daughter of Bertram, a rancher on Bear Creek, south of the Town of Piapot.

Farther down the South Fork, Hugo Maguire, and the Dalglish Bros. had a ranch. They were cowboys who had worked on the range and had now started a herd of their own. The next was R. Dunlop, with his wife and family, and at the forks of the Swift Current Creek, Kenneth Sinclair, who was an ex-policeman who had turned rancher. He also had put in some time in the Yukon during the gold rush. He had a good herd of cattle and horses. Going up the North Fork was Fred Craig, who had been range foreman of the "76" outfit but had now established a ranch of his own. Fred Craig was of pioneer stock; his father had been manager for the Cochrane outfit in the Alberta foothills before the C.P.R. was built, and they freighted from Fort Benton, Montana, on the Missouri River, the termination of steamboat navigation two hundred and fifty miles away. Fred Craig was a fine type of westerner, courteous and gentlemanly at all times, an expert plainsman. He kept open house at his ranch and you were always welcome. He passed away some years ago.

Marshall Cutting and family were a few miles up the creek from the Craig ranch. They were a lovely family - several daughters and one son. Their ranch was the social centre of that district, and Mrs. Cutting was a real mother to the cowboys for miles around.

The "76" outfit had a ranch just above the Cuttings, known as the cow camp, and kept some men there at all times. Jack Clark's ranch was located a few miles up the creek. Jack Clark was an Englishman of the pioneer type.

Major Moody and his wife came next on the North Fork. The major had seen considerable service in the R.N.W.M.P. and had spent four years in the far north. Mrs. Moody was with the major in the north and could recount many very interesting events, and of the customs and life of the Eskimos. I recall she spoke of Eskimo babies playing about without any clothing in ten below zero weather, and when becoming chilled would slip under the fur dress of the mother for warmth, like a baby chick and mother hen. They were very entertaining people, and could speak delightfully of many far places.

Mr. C. L. Lewis and family were located where the East-end mail trail crossed the North Fork. They were a lovely family. The two eldest sons were cowboys and worked on the range during the summer.

Dan Tenaille had built a ranch on the extreme heads of North Fork and Frenchman Creeks. Tenaille and his wife were young French people from France. His folks evidently were wealthy; had staked them to sixty thousand dollars to invest in the ranching business in Western Canada. They were lively and sociable, but had many amusing experiences trying to adjust themselves to frontier life. In order to travel more rapidly going to Maple Creek they usually had four horses hitched to a spring wagon and quite often one or more of the horses would give out on the trail, unable to maintain the high speed. The cash soon disappeared and he returned to France to report and raise further funds. As the story was told, his mother asked what he had learned of the ranching business and frontier life, and he replied that he had learned to blow his nose with his fingers and could swear in English. However, they returned and carried on until the Great War, when they hurried back to France. Dan was killed in the war fighting to save his beloved France.

Coming back to Jones' Coulee, a tributary of South Fork, we find Mrs. McRae and son Duncan located near the head with a small ranch. Next was Mr. Huxley and family - two girls and two boys - a lovely family. Their ranch is located in a beautiful spot, spring water and poplar trees around the buildings. Mr. Huxley was another young English pioneer helping to develop the west.

Next was the Stearns Bros. - Jim and Jack and sister Lizzie. Their ranch is the beauty spot of this part of the country. A large spring boils up near the home and great groves of poplar trees. Stearns Bros. are first class stockmen, and have an excellent herd of both horses and cattle. Mother Stearns was rated far and near for the fine gardens she produced.

Further on is Howard Parker's Ranch, also in a lovely spot. Mr. Parker is another Englishman who felt the call of the wild. He is an accomplished musician and it is a rare treat to hear him at the piano, as musical instruments were few and far between.

Mr. Cole, with his family, have a ranch in Pine Coulee, tributary of South Fork - two boys, Raymond and Albert, and one girl Ida, who was quite a favourite of mine. We would take her to the ranch for extended visits and we certainly had some rare times. Ray and Albert were both cowboys and usually one stayed at home to take care of their stock, and the other would work on the roundup. They were both expert teamsters.

This includes about all the ranches in a radius of fifty miles. All of these people were in the stock business and there was not a plowed field to be seen. The day of the wheat king was still to come. Practically all buildings were built of logs, and wood was used for fuel altogether. Most of the houses were whitewashed with native white mud, for which the river is named, and makes a pure white finish which is quite lasting and has a pleasant appearance.

Travel was by buckboard or horseback, and the social calls between the ranchers' families lasted from three days to a week.

Provisions and supplies were hauled from Maple Creek and the beef cattle were loaded at Maple Creek, Crane Lake, and Swift Current, with occasional herds being driven across the Montana line to the Great Northern railroad. There was no medical aid nearer than Maple Creek or Swift Current, but everyone seemed quite hardy, and aside from a broken or dislocated shoulder or collar bone, or an ankle twisted by being bucked off a broncho or having your saddle horse fall in a badger hole, there was no sickness.

There was very little fencing done, and cattle could roam at will, each branded with the owner's registered brand and recorded, also the same with horses. There are certain districts known as sheep districts, where sheep can be grazed, as sheep and cattle do not work together on the same range. In the Western U.S. there has been bitter war between cattle and sheep men over the public range, but here the government has designated different areas for each band. Inspectors are stationed at the livestock markets to inspect all live stock shipped in. They are engaged and paid by the live stock association and their reports are made to the association. There was not much rustling going on. The M.P. were in detachments throughout the country and continually riding about ready on short notice to investigate. Altogether we were healthy, safe and prosperous the fall of 1906. Little did we realize we were heading into the worst winter in the history of the range cattle business.

At the T-Down ranch we were very busy with final preparations for the winter. We butchered two large steers for beef; they would dress about one thousand pounds each. Some beef!

I rode to the Harry Cross Ranch about December 15th to see if he could winter the bulls. As I was getting uneasy about our hay supply, and we had about forty bulls at Stone Pile. I stopped at the M.P. barracks and the M.P. freighter had arrived from Maple Creek with a four-horse load of supplies. The driver reported that antelope in large herds were drifting across the C.P.R., and one herd had passed through the outskirts of town. These antelope were drifting from the high prairie country towards the Saskatchewan River. We talked this over and agreed it was a sign of a bad winter, for animals have a sure instinct. Harry Cross also was of the opinion we were heading for a rough winter. He figured he could winter the bulls, and I returned home. Snow was falling most all the afternoon and continued that night and next day. When the storm let up I left for Stone Pile to move the calves and the bulls up to the ranch. The distance between the two ranches was about thirty miles. I started at about five A.M. and made Stone Pile about eight P.M. I was riding a good strong horse - one of the best. Travelling was very difficult. The next morning was another blizzard and I stayed two days. We talked matters over and decided it was about impossible to move those cattle so far under such conditions. There was quite a lot of hay at Stone Pile - about three hundred and fifty tons. The idea was to provide enough hay to winter twelve

hundred to fifteen hundred calves, and depend on the range for the balance of the cattle. Some outfits did not wean any calves. The Turkey-Track east of us did not wean.

Jack Brown, the wolfer, was getting discouraged. The snow was so deep his dogs were not of much use and travelling so difficult he could not hunt very much. I returned to the ranch. It was a clear day and calm. There was a lot of cattle between the two ranches and they were rustling around. I rode through many different bunches during the day. The cattle were beginning to show the effects of the month of bad weather we had had. There was a good many cattle on the Whitemud that winter. The Creswell cattle, known as the Turkey-Track, to the east of us, were ranging around twenty-five thousand head. Our outfit, the Bloom Cattle Co., known as the T-Down, were ranging around ten thousand head. There was probably two thousand of "76" cattle that had drifted onto the Whitemud from the north in the early storms - the "76" range was to the north - and also quite a number of small rancher cattle from the Cypress Hills that had drifted. There was unlimited grass and water for what cattle there was in the country, but the winter range was limited. I am speaking of the country from Eastend east. The only country suitable for winter range was along the Whitemud River and the side coulees where there was brush and natural shelter. The general plan was to push the cattle away from the rough country, in the spring, and save the river for winter. There was a sort of gentlemen's agreement as to range lines, the line between the Turkey-Track and the T-Down was the Fifty Mile Crossing on the Whitemud, then north-west across the present town of Instow to the Swift Current at the mouth of Rock Creek; then the South Fork of Swift Current Creek marked the line between the "76" and the Cypress Hills ranchers and the T-Down around Eastend, and then south from Eastend to the Montana line. The west line between the T-Down and the up-river ranchers known as the Whitemud Pool, east between the Turkey-Track and the T-Down south of Fifty-Mile. The dividing was on the divide where Orkney now stands. Both the Turkey-Track and ourselves had been careless of the winter range and had dumped big herds on the river at different times and consequently the winter grazing had been reduced, for which we paid dearly.

I returned to the ranch from Stone Pile, and Christmas and New Year's passed with no visiting among the neighbours, as travelling was so difficult. We had a good Christmas dinner and the boys said they could stand Christmas dinner every day.

I made another trip to Stone Pile about January 10th. Travelling was fierce and I was fifteen hours making the thirty miles, but spent considerable time looking in the brush in the bends of the river. I noticed a few dead ones all the way. The boys at Stone Pile reported some dying there. They were riding all the time picking up the weakest cattle and trying to get them to the ranch, and prowling the coulees looking for bunches that were snowed in. Cattle standing in some sheltered spot during a blizzard often are surrounded by snow, and as they move about enough to pack the snow in a small spot there is a wall of snow around them often six feet high, and it is impossible for them to get out until someone finds them and breaks a trail.

Coyotes were plentiful along the river, feeding on the dying cattle. Also the grey wolves killed many live ones. The bushes were full of porcupines gnawing the bark for a living. Deer and antelope were plentiful and the bushes were filled with ruffed grouse.

I returned to the upper ranch after a few days. We now had had two months of very bad winter with many blizzards lasting two or three days. Through the M.P. we learned that this extreme weather is general over the entire west. Men were working from daylight until dark; hay stacks were snowed under and have to be shoveled out, often for several consecutive days. Fences were becoming covered and had to be shoveled to keep cattle from walking into and destroying the hay. Water holes would often be drifted over with several feet of snow and must be uncovered. Cattle sheds were filling up both inside and out, and cattle could walk over drifts to top of the sheds. The sheds were built with pole roofs covered with brush and hay. We fashioned a snow plow with some heavy timbers and tried to snow plow in places where snow was not so deep, as the grass was very tall under the snow and would provide plenty of feed if cattle could reach it, but the snow was too heavy, and after a few days' killing work on our horses we were obliged to give it up. We were becoming very uneasy. Spring was far away, and our hay was diminishing rapidly. There was no chance for further supplies of feed to be had - everyone was in the same boat! Harry Cross was very pleased that I had not been able to deliver the bulls to him.

The Z-X was working day and night trying to save some cattle. Joe Renault was making the fight of his life trying to haul the mail from Maple Creek to Eastend.

I returned to Stone Pile about January 20th. We had decided not to gather any more cattle off the range to feed, and to turn back any we had in that showed any chance of living, on account of having the calves to care for until spring. They could not stand the hardships so well as the older cattle. I would pass odd bunches of horses on the way and they seemed in very good flesh and doing well in deep snow. Horses stayed on the high ridges where the snow did not lay so deep and paw the snow through to the grass. Cattle do not have this intelligence and only paw when they want to show off. The men at Stone Pile were wearing out their overshoes and mittens and were patching them with pieces of canvas or overalls to hold them together. I saw where I would have to send to Maple Creek for some supplies in the near future. The cabin was quite comfortable, and Spurlock had a fiddle and could play all the Red River jiggs, and some of the boys were pretty good stepdancers. We used tallow candles for light, for kerosene oil is a very unhandy commodity to freight in a mixed load of provisions. Invariably it taints, and sugar, flour and fruit is not very palatable seasoned with kerosene. The fiddle helped spend the evenings, for there were no callers.

About one-thirty we were awakened by someone pounding the door and calling. It was a young half-breed Indian we called Big Antoine, who had walked from the War Hole Coulee, about twenty miles to the north-east. His story was that early in the fall, in company with a party of Indians, they went hunting to the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana, and had visited for some time at Wood Mountain striking the Whitemud about the Montana line, then travelled up the Whitemud to the mouth of Breed Creek. There were a few cabins there and as the weather was very severe they stopped, waiting for the weather to moderate. They were heading for the Pelletier Lake to winter. Becoming alarmed at the continued storms they moved on up the Whitemud to the War Hole Coulee, intending to cross from there to the Lake over high prairie about thirty-five miles. Their horses were getting weak and poor, and a series of bad storms discouraged them of attempting the last leg of their journey to the Lake. They had been about twenty days at the War Hole and had gotten all the flour and sugar from the Turkey-Track camp that the

boys could spare. Antoine reported the deer and antelope were getting very scarce and cattle dying fast. They were killing coyotes which were fat and using the grease to cook the meat with. They were living entirely on meat. There were twenty-two people in the party and six children. He said the children had gotten so they could not eat and were crying for bread; but the balance could live on meat. I asked if he could take a pack horse. He replied, "No". He would have to follow the ridge to get back to the camp with a pack horse and it would take two days and probably longer, and that he would carry what he could, which would last the children some time. Antoine was a large, fine young man accustomed to hardships. He stopped one day with us and fixed a sort of pack for himself out of some canvas, and I am sure left with one hundred pounds on his shoulders. I told him we intended to open the camp in Bates Coulee in a few days as we had some hay there, and I was putting two men there to gather the poor cattle and feed up the hay. This camp was within ten miles or so of their camp and we would keep in touch with them. He left at four A.M. and was sure he would make his camp by daylight the following morning. I moved Emmet Smith and Jack Brown to the Bates camp. While at Stone Pile we took a jumper loaded with the beds and provisions. Jack and I rode ahead of the team and broke the trail. Travelling was fierce. We arrived after dark and had to shovel our way into the shed and cabin. We were certainly glad to get inside. I returned to the ranch and brought Spurlock with me. We had a very bad day; the wind north-west was right in our faces and blowing hard enough to drift the snow, and we could only see a very short distance. Spurlock had been working hauling hay, etc., around the ranch and had not taken these long trips without dinner or rest. Along in the afternoon he was sure we were lost, and had a lot of questions. I was leading the way and could not hear him very well, and at any rate had all I could do to keep my directions. We were walking a great deal of the time, leading our horses; finally he felt tired and sleepy and insisted on stopping to rest. I had quite a fight to keep this man going. If he had quit and got settled down he would have frozen to death. It was about midnight when we made the ranch and we found his face, hands and feet were frosted, but not badly. I shall always remember that trip. We found the thermometer ranged from thirty to forty below all that day. I started Jim Baker to Stone Pile with a pack horse loaded with provisions.

Jim was raised in the mountains of Wyoming, and could certainly stand cold and hardships. The first of February the weather turned mild and we were happy; this looked like the long-awaited Chinook. I started Punch Patterson to Maple Creek for supplies, as we were afraid our provisions would not last until spring. He drove a big team of Clydesdale stallions we had been hauling hay with. Harry Willis came down for a day or two and brought considerable news.

We started with five hundred calves for the Stone Pile ranch. We had more hay there. George Mock and I and Gus went the first day with a team and a load of hay in front. We were four days making the trip. The first two nights we returned to the ranch our trail did not snow in and we could jog right along. The third night we went on to stay at Stone Pile and the boys came back to help and we made it in the fourth night. The weather was very mild, thawing a little during the day but freezing at night. We turned out nearly all the grown cattle as we had about seven hundred and fifty calves now. I returned to the ranch and the cattle were working out into the breaks. There were a great many dead in the brush patches. But we were in hopes the Chinook would clear off the range. This mild spell lasted ten days and did not clear any ground below Eastend. The snow settled, thawed on top,

and the mild weather was followed by terrific storms and intense cold. This made a crust of ice from two to four inches thick all over the country and dashed all our hopes for a reasonable loss.

Punch Patterson had made the trip to Maple Creek and was met by John Survant, a stockholder in the Company. He had become alarmed by my reports, and the continued bad storms in the northwest, and decided to make a trip. John and Punch were about halfway from Maple Creek when the mild weather ended. It was fourteen days from the time Punch left until he returned, but had brought a fairly good load of essentials, also some long stories of mishaps. They had to unload and dig out many times in the Cypress Hills. The Chinook had been stronger, especially further west in the hills, and consequently the loss was not so heavy, but down out of the hills in the prairie country the Chinook had ruined everything. Cattle cut their feet on the ice and would not move around very much - just stood in the bends of the river and gnawed willows and sage.

Jim Baker came up for supplies and John Survant returned to Stone Pile with him. They struck a very bad day and had to unload several times and dig out. They made it about one A.M. the next morning - nearly twenty-four hours without rest. The boys were pleased to see them and the new supply of winter clothes, also to have Survant to talk with, for they had not had much outside company. I got to Stone Pile about February 20th and we sized up the situation. We figured we had hay for the calves until the end of March, but the loss on the range would be heavy - forty or fifty per cent. At any rate so far we had not lost any men. Survant said Jim Baker had saved his life on the trip to Stone Pile. He was ready to give up several times but Jim kept on as usual and encouraged him.

There were a few mild days around March 20th, and we took Survant to Eastend post office and he went into Maple Creek with Joe Renault, the mail carrier. He took with him the memory of thirty days of hardships and horror. Following the few mild days there was a return of a very severe lot of storms, lasting until April 1st. Our hay was nearly finished, sheds were filled up and of no use. We were feeding the roof of the sheds, slough grass and willows. Calves were dying rapidly, and still the grim fight went on. There was a near fatal accident at the Z-X ranch about this time. Ridley, the young son of Mr. and Mrs. Buck Hardin, in some way ignited his clothing from a kerosene lamp. His mother grabbed him and started to run out through the kitchen, when the cook had the presence of mind to throw a heavy overcoat around mother and son and smothered the fire. Ridley was burned quite badly, and Buck sent a man to Maple Creek for a doctor. He had a bad trip, but finally returned with the doctor. The little boy did not suffer any serious consequences from the burns.

Jack Brown and Emmet Smith returned to Stone Pile from the Bates camp, having fed what hay there was. Jack had made a trip to the Indian camp and reported that when the Chinook struck, Antoine had walked to Pelletier Lake for help. There was quite a number of Indians wintering there; it was an ideal place, open spring water, plenty of wood and good grazing. By chopping holes in the ice they could catch lovely fish. Deer and antelope were plentiful. Antoine had returned with help, plenty of good strong horses and men, and they moved out at once and made it across all right. Jack stopped all night with them, then went down to the Turkey-Track camp. There were two men there who reported cattle dying by the thousands as far as they could ride from their camp, but had not been able to reach the men at the lower Turkey-Track camp at the Montana line, which was about thirty miles. A. J. Bryson, one of the Turkey-Track men, came back with Jack and visited the boys for a couple of weeks and took what provisions he could carry on his horse, as they were getting short on some articles.

The wolves were numerous at the Bates camp. Owing to the fact that he had been unable to use the hounds he decided to put out strychnine. After a few days he went to see if any of the wolves had taken the bait. The hounds were well trained and he could make them stay at camp. So he left them at Stone Pile and rode away. He arrived at the Bates camp shortly before sundown, and putting his horse in the shed he walked up the coulee a few hundred yards to some open springs where he had put out the poison. He found the trail of several wolves around the spring, and following the trail some distance saw where one had rolled in the snow. He was certain they had eaten some poison and were getting sick. He continued to follow the trail which turned east across some rock ridges where he had difficulty in finding tracks. This was a wild rocky piece of country and pretty soon it became dark. The air was full of frost - twenty-five or thirty below zero. He could no longer distinguish the trail and had become bewildered as to how to return to the camp. After wandering for some time he got into a deep coulee and decided to follow this to the river. The distance was about two miles, and when he reached the river he was at a loss which way to turn; So finding a stretch of ice where the snow had blown off he decided to walk up and down to keep from freezing. What few willows that grew there were filled with snow. He could not find enough wood to make much of a fire. He had with him a twenty-two calibre rifle and had stood it up in the snow along his line of march. The sky had cleared somewhat about midnight, and a sickly moon gave some light. About one o'clock he noticed some animal coming across the ice towards him, and here was his pet hound, having become lonesome, had taken his trail, followed to the lower camp to where he left his horse, then picked up his trail and finally caught up with him. He had a great visit with this dog; a great stag-hound nearly as large as a calf. The dog made a few trips back and forth with him, then laid down. In a short time Jack noticed the dog coming towards him in an odd way, the hair of his mane appearing to stand up and his great jaws opening and closing. He yelled sharply but the dog kept coming, a fearful sight. He was standing near where his rifle was, and grabbing it, fired point blank into the dog's mouth at about three feet distance. He was lucky enough to kill him. No doubt the dog had eaten some of the poison bait and it was just beginning to take effect. Quite an experience - lost in thirty-five below zero weather and attacked by a mad dog. When morning broke he found his way to camp and returned to Stone Pile feeling very sad.

I made a trip to Stone Pile towards the end of March, and it surely was a gruesome ride. The cattle were in all stages of dying. The brush was simply lined with dead cattle. The live ones, at night, would lie down on the dead and many would not be able to get up again; consequently they were literally piled up, dead and dying together.

We were out of feed at Stone Pile and we drove the calves and what grown cattle we had into the best looking spot we could find, then turned and left them. I am sure every man had an ache in his throat. The first week in April was very mild and the snow was melting rapidly, and some bare spots began to show on the side hills. Mrs. Otterson and I rode up to the Z-X ranch to see Mr. and Mrs. Hardin. It was the first time Mrs. Otterson had been away from the ranch since we arrived in November. When we returned the water was running on the ice nearly up to the stirrups.

Spurlock and Jack Brown left for Montana during this mild spell. Jack had not killed a wolf all winter, and Spurlock was discouraged and wanted to leave. I gave them a pack horse and they took some provisions and headed for the Morton cabin on White Water. Little did we think when we bid goodbye to happy, likeable Jack Brown

that he was starting on his last trail. They laid out the first night, but made the cabin the next night. They were all right now as they could follow the White Water to Milk River at Henry Martin's ranch on the big bend.

Spurlock continued on to Malta, but Jack stopped at Martins for a couple of weeks. He had hunted wolves there before. Milk River was in flood and Jack had decided to leave. He wanted to cross the river at Martin's and visit the Great Falls ranch. Martin had a small boat he used in crossing when the river was in flood, and Carl Martin insisted that Jack should use the boat and lead his horse. But Jack was very much at home in water and had great confidence in his horse. He told Carl that any horse that could not swim that little stream should drown. He spurred his horse into the stream and everything went fine until he reached the centre of the river. Then, according to Carl, man and horse began to drift rapidly down stream. The horse began to turn over, and Jack disappeared, never to return to the surface. Evidently the horse had struck him in the struggle and rendered him helpless. Martin secured the horse and saddle. They notified the authorities and they dragged and dynamited the river, but his body was never found. His bones are whitening somewhere on the bottom of the Milk River these many years. We knew very little of this man's life, and all we had to go on was his yarns of life in Nova Scotia. Enquiries failed to shed any light on his relatives, and I presume is listed as missing by his relatives and friends. Peace be with him in the happy hunting ground.

April was a very stormy unsettled month with some very heavy falls of snow. But the sun was getting strong and the snow was settling and bare spots began to show on the hills. Everyone was snow blind - a very disagreeable and more or less dangerous affliction. Emmet Smith left for the south. For months he planned to leave as soon as he could travel. This was his first winter in the north and he was sure that all this snow could not melt away in one season. About April fifteenth the cowboys began to drift in looking for the summer's work. There are quite a few I remember - Thos. Nash, Jim Fulton, Gill Bradley, "Slippers", "Tough" Moore, Clint and Bob Lewis and many others.

I made a deal with a man by the name of Johnson to hunt wolves. He had a ranch near the Huxley ranch where he lived with his wife and family. He was nicknamed "Winchester" Johnson. He was an expert marksman. The wolves were very troublesome and the spring was a favourable time to find the dens of young puppies and destroy them. Johnson had considerable experience hunting wolves. He spent seven or eight years wolfing for cattle outfits in Wyoming and certainly knew the business.

A number of saddle horses had crossed to the south side of the Whitemud and we were anxious to get them before the snow disappeared, for they would return to Milk River. About May first I started Jim Baker, Ira Triplett, Gill Bradley, Gus Shultz and Punch Patterson with a small outfit to gather the south side. They were out ten days and had some very bad weather, but brought in quite a bunch of horses which were all in fine shape.

The river was lined with antelope working back to the northern ranges. They had drifted south in the early winter. The water was very high in the river and ice was running and the antelope do not like to tackle the crossing. The boys were getting quite a few duckings crossing ice jams.

We made a boat of sorts at headquarters to cross the

river, which was quite a help, especially in crossing with provisions, beds, etc. We were not very handy with oars and had some exciting times crossing and were often washed down stream several hundred yards before making a landing.

We started out on the horse round-up about May 15th. Moving out in the country north of where Shaunavon now stands. The country was a mass of lakes and it was difficult to move around as the coulees and low places were still deep with snow. The horses were in fine condition. We turned loose one hundred and thirty-six head of saddle and work horses and gathered one hundred and thirty-five, and they were all poor and worn out in the fall. This was certainly a real horse range. The stock horses were all fat and fine yearling colts with their mothers, for we did not wean the colts, but let them run with their mothers.

Quite a number of cowboys were bucked off. They were greatly improved on their condition in December when we turned them loose. We finished the horse round-up the last of May. We sorted out the mares and put them under herd for the summer, and moved into the headquarter ranch to load supplies and get ready to start on the cattle round-up. Quite a number of outside men had come in to work with our round-up. They represented the different outfits and stock associations. There was Elmer Hanson from the Turkey-Track ranch, Mexican Shorty from the "76" ranch - I have long forgotten his correct name - Ray Cole from the Z-X ranch, Joe Isobell for D. Pollock and W. Axton and the small ranches around the east end of the Cypress Hills, Steve Ganon for the Whitemud Pool Association, Jim Stone from Malta, Montana for the Circle Diamond ranch.

We left the T-Down ranch on June the 1st and moved out south-west towards Battle Creek. We had an arrangement with the Turkey-Track as to range work. We took the country as far west as Willow Creek south to the Milk River, and east to where the Whitemud empties into Milk River. The Turkey-Track was to work as far east as Big Muddy and south to Poplar Creek, Big and Little Porcupine Creeks, Rock Creek and south to Milk River. We gathered and moved all cattle back to the Whitemud and expected to meet at Stone Pile the first of July, then work through the cattle and move our cattle on to summer range south of the Whitemud, and the Turkey Track to their summer range along Old Wives Creek.

We moved on to Battle Creek and worked down to Chinook, Montana. Cattle were not very plentiful. The guess as to the loss ranged from thirty to thirty-five per cent. We swung east as far as Harlem, then north up to Thirty-Mile Creek across to Silver Bow Creek, and then on through to the Whitemud. We covered a large piece of country and gathered only five hundred head of Canadian cattle. We turned this herd loose on the north side of the Whitemud and started back south to finish working the country between the Whitemud and Milk River. About this time I developed a sore throat and some fever, and finally left the outfit and rode into Dodson, Montana, and took a train to Malta. Dr. Clay, an old friend, was at the station and I told him my trouble. He took me to the office for inspection and says "Heavens, man, you have a bad case of measles!" I have an uncle at Chinook and they had a baby boy some six or eight months old. I had never seen this baby and of course Mary brought him out. But this chap does not act up very satisfactory and the mother had many excuses. But I suggested that babies usually are cross and ill-natured. She says, "Likely you can handle him properly", and placed him in my arms. And that is where I contracted the measles. I was very sick for a few days and had very little recollection as to what happened. However,

after the rash broke out I began to recover. The round-up came along and I was still in quarantine. The boys said they were not finding many cattle. They left a saddle horse for me to use in overtaking the outfit when I was released. We figured out the work from day to day so I would know where they were on a given day.

I was finally turned loose, and I hired two cowboys to work on the outfit: Doc Courgan and John Townsley. They had been in Malta since the previous fall and were having such a good time they failed to get out when the outfits were hiring men in the spring. We left Malta and expected to make Gloyn's ranch at Horse Shoe Lake the first day. The mosquitoes were fierce, and these men were pretty soft. They were nearly driven wild. Doc finally figured out that as John and himself were saturated with whiskey the mosquitoes were sucking this whiskey from them and were all drunk, which accounted for the swarms following the party. We made Horse Shoe Lake all right. Fred Gloyn was in the sheep business and the winter just about killed all his stock.

We found the round-up the next day at the Willows on the head of White Water Creek. We worked on to the Stone Pile camp and turned our herd north of the river. We had about two thousand head. We learned that one of the Turkey-Track outfits had thrown back a herd from the Big Muddy and Wood Mountain country. They had less than one thousand head. We learned that the Matador Company, north of Swift Current, had got a tally on their herd and figured the loss around thirty-five per cent. They had fenced their range and could get an idea of the loss much sooner than the range outfits. They were ranging about six thousand, all steers.

Everyone by now was convinced that the loss would be very heavy. Our outfit started back south to work the lower Whitemud country and back up the Whitemud on the west and south side. I went on to the headquarter ranch. I left one man at Stone Pile to look after the young horses, in addition to Wolfer Johnson. Johnson was rather a queer chap. He told me that a number of years before a horse had fallen on him and hurt his head badly, and he said that occasionally he was subject to pain in his head that nearly drove him wild. He did not care for company and preferred to be in camp alone. There was one small son George who spent some of the time with him. I explained all this to our man and asked him to humor Johnson if necessary to get along, as we needed his services. All the satisfaction I got from this fellow was that he would not molest Johnson.

When we arrived at Stone Pile, Johnson was not around. I asked our man how he was making out with the wolves and where he was. He told me that Johnson was doing all right and had found several dens of wolves and had killed some grown ones, but had not seen him for a week or ten days. He supposed he had gone to his family in the hills, although he had not mentioned that he was going.

I went on to the T-Down ranch and in a couple of days little George came along on his way to see his father. I questioned him and was told that his father was not at home since we had left on the round-up. I went with George to the Stone Pile camp and gathered up Johnson's bed, etc., also an extra horse. We had advised George to take everything home as I was fearful something had happened to his father. I further questioned our man and we rode the surrounding country but found no trace of Johnson. He had nothing with him at the time he left except his rifle and the horse he was riding; no extra clothes and no provisions. I notified the Mounted Police and they visited Mrs. Johnson but she could give them no idea of where he might go. Inquiry throughout

the country brought no news. The police communicated with officials in Montana and Wyoming. All this time, in my own mind, I was nursing the idea that our cowboy had killed Johnson in some row. For in general Johnson would have to be killed quickly, for he was one of the most expert rifle shots. I said nothing of this but watched this fellow closely. Time passed, and I believe in October the police received word from Wyoming that Johnson was found near his old range, and had papers on him to identify him as the missing man. His mind had failed him entirely, and as he was an American he was committed to an institution. I felt rather ashamed of myself, for if this man had never been found I would always have been certain that our cowboy had killed him. Johnson had travelled south five or six hundred miles and some guiding instinct had returned him to his old range.

I met the round-up about ten days later, near the White Water Butte, near the Canadian line, and worked north-west, striking the Whitemud at the mouth of Mule Creek. We had a herd of about twenty-five hundred head. The Turkey-Track outfits were both there. John Day was foreman of one outfit, and Joe Driscoll foreman of the other. Tony Day, the manager of the Company was with the outfit, and we figured up the number of cattle that we had all together, and the loss was appalling, after allowing for a percentage missed on the range and for what cattle that were already on the part of the range where we had been turning these herds. We estimated the loss dead at sixty or sixty-five percent, and a subsequent tally confirmed this. I was well acquainted with Tony Day when I was a youngster in the south, and met him on the National Cattle Trail that extended from Texas to Miles City, Montana. We started to work the home range and sort the cattle for the summer, and a few days later Tony Day and I were riding together when he made a decision to quit the range cattle business. He said, "I am getting along in years and I am through with range business. I believe I have enough left out of this wreck to keep myself and family. I have spent my entire life on the range and have been set back several times by hard winters. The balance of the Company can do as they please, but I am ready to cash in and take my loss." I replied that I was rather of the opinion that the stockholders in the T-Down Company would likely feel discouraged and ready to close out also. But personally I was in favour of carrying on and with a little more preparation for winter and by carefully protecting the winter range, together with a reduced number of stock on the range we should be able to make up the loss in a few years.

However, the Turkey-Track sold out the next year to Gordon, Ironsides and Fares Co. of Winnipeg.

Mr. Day made his home in Medicine Hat and continued to live there for a time, after closing out the Turkey-Track outfit on the Whitemud. After and failing health decided him to return to the warmer climate of the south, and they moved to San Diego, California, where he passed away about 1923 or 1924.

Tony Day was a very widely known figure in the range country of the United States and Western Canada. For many years he maintained big breeding ranches in Texas and New Mexico, and the young steers were driven north to finish. He ranged a large herd of beef cattle for ten years in the Black Hills country of South Dakota, and Mr. Creswell and Tony Day came to Saskatchewan in 1902 and located the Whitemud Ranch. To this ranch they shipped and drove twenty thousand first class Hereford breeding stock, known in Texas as the Chas. Goodnight breed, admittedly the finest herd of breeding stock of its size in Texas.

The spring round-ups were about all finished by this

time and the extent of the cattle loss was pretty well known. The "76" outfit, with headquarters at Crane Lake, reported about the same loss as on the Whitemud - around sixty to sixty-five per cent. R. Springeet was the manager. The Shonkin Pool, known in Saskatchewan as the "7" outfit, with headquarters at the Big Stick Lake, north of Maple Creek, reported fifty to sixty per cent. Charles Williams was manager. Wash Mussett and the Massingale Bros. on the Saskatchewan River, reported fifty to sixty per cent. L. P. Pruitt, on Lost River, south of Medicine Hat, reported a loss of about fifty per cent. The Empire Cattle Co., located on Willow Creek, near the Port of Entry, about fifty per cent. Berner Gibbons was manager. All of the outfits mentioned were ranging from five thousand to twenty thousand cattle. Among the smaller herds the loss was not quite so heavy. Hooper and Huckvale, on Manyberries Creek, estimated a loss of thirty per cent. Mitchell Bros. and John Reed, on Willow Creek, about the same. Joe Wylie, Linder Bros., Jim Gaff, Gilchrist Bros., Whitcomb and Ziegler, in the Battle Creek and Davis Lake country, reported losses of thirty to forty per cent. In the district between Davis Lake and Eastend, H. Bettington, R. Bolton, Bauldy Reed, Spencer Pierce, Enright and Strong reported losses from thirty to fifty per cent. The Cross Bros. - Frank and Harry - located on the Frenchman Creek, had small loss, for they provided considerable hay. Around the east end of Cypress Hills and Jones' Coulee, Crawford and Jones, Dan Pollock, W. Axton, Stern Bros. and Jack Clark estimated losses thirty to fifty per cent. Such a loss was appalling, and while the value of cattle was not very high, this die-out was soon reflected in lower prices. Practically all the large owners began to make preparations to close out or still further reduce their herds. Banks and other financial concerns had made heavy advances in the range cattle business and were feeling very anxious as the loss was very heavy over the entire range country all the way to the Mountains in Alberta. Quite a number of herds were sold the summer of 1907 at prices ranging from sixteen to twenty dollars per head, with sucking calves thrown in. Most of the leased land was given up by the ranchers and applications for new leases were withdrawn. There had been many plans made for 1907 by range outfits.

In the Western States the range was overstocked and was being settled and many outfits were expecting to lease land in Canada and move their herds. But the heavy loss put a stop to the cattle boom. I am of the opinion that practically all the country from Wood Mountain west to the Alberta line, and north to the Saskatchewan River would have been under lease by the fall of 1907.

There is not very much left to say in regard to the winter for the T-Down outfit. We continued until 1910, with very favourable winters and rising prices and were able to close out with a small profit.

I have written this record with the idea that it might be interesting in the years to come. I have tried to picture life and conditions as they were at that time and my experience was not unusual, for we were all in the same business, and our lives pretty much the same.

The country I have mentioned here was really where the range cattle men made the last stand. Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, the Dakotas, and Montana were all in turn covered with range outfits, but the railroad and the homesteader was never far behind, and soon the country would be settled and would not be suitable for the range business.

There are quite a number of large ranches in Saskatchewan at the present time, but the days of the open range have passed.

And so I conclude my story of the winter of 1906 and '7.

